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REFLECTIONS

ON THE

PERNICIOUS CUSTOM OF RECRUITING

BY

CRIMPS;

AND ON VARIOUS OTHER MODES

NOW PRACTISED IN THE

BRITISH ARMY.

IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

"*Quæque ipse miserrima vidi,*
"*Et quorum pars magna fui.*"

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A LETTER, &c.

I Agree with you, my dear Sir, that the ſymptoms of diſcontent, which are breaking out in London, are truly alarming: but theſe things are the common attendants of an unſucceſful war; and I fear all that you and I can do, is to ſit ſtill and hope for better times.

With reſpect to the information you aſk of me, concerning the buſineſs of a Crimp, and the uſual regular mode of recruiting the army, I will inform you in the beſt manner I am able; but you muſt have patience with me, and recollect I have been bred a Soldier, not a man of letters.

It would be difficult to perſuade an honeſt Engliſhman, who adores the conſtitution of his country, who believes the law is equal and open to all, and who thinks that Chriſtianity is really the Religion of England—it would be difficult, I ſay, to perſuade ſuch a man of the force and deception which are daily practiſed to engage our unhappy countrymen in the trammels of military law.

One would think, it were quite bad enough to inveigle them by the various tricks and arts that are *authoriſed* by *law*, whereby we take ſuch an undue advantage of the ignorance of the lower ranks; and whereby we ungenerouſly decoy them into the fatigues and dangers of war for the eaſe of their betters, who never dream of fighting their own battles, but wanton at home in all the riot and exceſs of luxury, feeling nothing of the real inconvenience of warfare, and even knowing as little of it, except what they read for amuſement in the newſpapers.

This conſideration (though it is fraught with the moſt ſerious conſequences) is nevertheleſs laughable in one point

of view. For what mortal that had never before ſeen a ſoldier (provided he could for a moment repreſs all ſerious reflection) could look without laughing, upon a man accoutred with ſo much paltry gaudineſs and affected finery? the coarſeſt manufacture that can be made of wool, dyed of a brick-duſt colour goes down with him, becauſe it is in imitation of ſcarlet or crimſon cloth; and to make him think himſelf as like his officer as poſſible, with little or no coſt, inſtead of ſilver or gold lace, his hat is trimmed with white or yellow worſted; which in another man would deſerve bedlam!—Yet theſe fine allurements, and the noiſe made upon a calf's ſkin, have drawn in, and been the deſtruction of more men in reality, than all the real or fancied crimes in the world. To day the ſwine-herd puts on his red coat, and believes every body in earneſt that calls him gentleman; a few days after the ſerjeant gives him a ſwinging rap with his cane, for holding his muſquet an inch higher than he ſhould do, for not turning out his toes, or for looking a little awry. As to the real *dignity* of the employment, we know that when recruits are wanted, men convicted of burglary, and other capital offences, are gladly enliſted and received for ſoldiers; which ſhews that to be made a ſoldier, is deem'd a preferment next to hanging.

A trooper is ſtill worſe than a foot ſoldier, for when he is moſt at eaſe, this gentleman-ſoldier as he is called, has the mortification of being groom to a horſe, that ſpends much more of his pay than he does himſelf, and which he is obliged to attend and rub down at leaſt three times a day. Can we help wondering, I ſay, that ſo many unhappy wretches ſhould be ſo ſilly as to be proud of being called Gentlemen Soldiers?—But the truth is, that although they are entrapped into it, without perceiving the ſnare, yet there is not a man in the army who would not leap for joy, to be diſcharged; even ſuch as have no homes, no trades to reſort to.—But alas! this cannot be. The man who enliſts in England, is a ſoldier for life; unleſs indeed the *Government* ſhould ceaſe to want him, or unleſs by wounds, age, or ſickneſs, he ſhould ceaſe to be uſeful to his employers: in which caſe they have a right to diſcharge him, and they uſually do diſcharge and allow him to go about his buſineſs. Some few of them indeed, if they have had

ſtrength

ſtrength to ſerve twenty-four years, and are in favor, are rewarded with ſixpence a day.

Another *legal* method of raiſing Soldiers is by *preſſing*, as 'tis called; that is to ſay when a poor man, who cannot give a ſatisfactory account of himſelf to the magiſtrate who apprehends him, is liable to be ſent to the neareſt jail and to be there confined 'till it ſuits the War-Office to ſend for him; he is then conveyed forcibly to Chatham Barracks, there to be locked up with others of his own unhappy ſituation till he has been taught the uſe of a muſket, and is fit to be ſhipped off for the Weſt Indies or the coaſt of Africa—I repeat it again, that Perſons calling themſelves Britons and Freemen can ſcarcely be expected to believe the truth of theſe reflections unleſs they chance to have been eye witneſſes. But I appeal to the veracity and the conſcience of thoſe Officers who have been concerned in buſineſs of this ſort, particularly to thoſe who have been much at Chatham Barracks in time of War.

Among many other wretched caſes of men thus forcibly made ſoldiers, which occur to me, I ſhall ſingle out one:—A private ſoldier (of the 79th, I think) had deſerted from his Regiment in Jamaica about eleven years ago. The miſerable victim was apprehended and brought to a general Court-Martial. The ceremony in theſe caſes is not long. It was only neceſſary to prove that the man was a ſoldier, and that he had deſerted: This was done in a few minutes, by one of the ſerjeants, who proved he had paid him his ſubſiſtence during many months, and that he had abſconded. The poor creature was then called on for his defence. He ſaid, (and I ſhall never forget it!) that he did not pretend to deny having eſcaped from his quarters; that his intention was and always had been, as ſoon as he could find an opportunity, to return to England, where he had a wife and children lingering for want of him; that he had never *enliſted*; that to be a ſoldier was one of the laſt things in the world he ſhould ever have thought of; and that he was as *unfit* as he was *unwilling* to be one; that to be ſure he had received pay as a ſoldier more than a twelvemonth; but that he muſt have ſtarved if he had not; for that he had been taken up in his own Country, and after an examination before ſome Juſtices, without any particular crime being laid to his charge he was ſent to jail to ſerve the King, as they told

told him; that he had remained there ſome weeks; that he was then marched up to London in hand-cuffs, where he was again impriſoned a conſiderable time in the Savoy Priſon, with many others; from which place he was marched as before to Chatham Barracks, where he was again confined till an opportunity offered of ſending him on board a ſhip with ſome hundreds more for the Iſland of Jamaica; and that he called God to witneſs, the whole had been poſitively againſt his will; therefore he hoped he ſhould be conſidered accordingly. Such was his defence. The opinion of the court was that he was guilty of deſertion, and he was ſentenced to be ſhot; nor indeed could the court determine otherwiſe than find him guilty, as I apprehend; for the articles of war ſay (ſect. 6th. art. 1) "All officers and ſoldiers who (having *received* pay or having been duly inliſted in our ſervice) ſhall be convicted of having deſerted the ſame, ſhall ſuffer death or ſuch other puniſhment as by a Court Martial ſhall be inflicted."

Beſides which, the law for authoriſing the impreſſing of ſoldiers, ſays, that men ſo impreſſed be conſidered as ſoldiers duly inliſted.—I confeſs with ſhame and remorſe, I have been the vile jailer of ſome of theſe unhappy wretches before and after they had joined any of his Majeſties troops. —One man in particular I remember was delivered to my care at Henley in Oxfordſhire, and as no others were ſent with him, it was not worth the while to ſend a party for one ſolitary individual; ſo that he remained many weeks in a wretched dark hole, and I ſincerely believe if my ſervant had not humanely brought him every day for an hour or two to my fire he muſt have periſhed, for it happened to be terribly froſty weather; the poor fellow's ſuppoſed crime was, that he was a poacher, though even this had not been proved on him.—

In addition to theſe cruel methods by which men are legally brought into the ſervice of their King, as it is called, we ſhould not forget the miſeries they are forced to undergo when they have actually joined their Regiments. I ſay nothing of the actual dangers of *War*, for I hold that every man from the higheſt to the loweſt is bound to take his *ſhare* of them in every war which is actually for the defence of the country; but I ſpeak of the innumerable evils to which theſe poor wretches are liable in pecuniary matters, and moſt

moſt of thoſe too, in times of peace and plenty *to* their betters. In the firſt place, it is well known that when the pay of the army was fixed; the principle on which the country decided was this; "that whereas the ſoldiers were ſuppoſed to be of the loweſt orders of people, it was neceſſary only that their daily pay ſhould be equal to the daily hire of labourers; and accordingly eight-pence a day was the ſum fixed upon; for that ſum was at that time the average price of day-labour. But it is evident to the meaneſt capacity how much the price of every thing has advanced ſince that time; yet the pay of the ſoldier has never been raiſed. It has often been a matter of ſurpriſe to me, though I have lived ſo much among them, how they contrived to exiſt; but the truth is, I believe the greater part of them do ſeldom really get their bellies full, in ſpight of their finery with which we ſee them harneſſed. For indeed, though the government allows eightpence a Day, the wretch himſelf ſeldom receives more than threepence or fourpence for his food; the reſt being ſtopped by the Officers to procure him cloaths.

And here, my friend, I muſt take the liberty, while I lament the fate of the ſoldier, to vindicate the character of the Officers; which I am ſorry to ſay has been ſeriouſly and unjuſtly attacked in a pamphlet called "The SOLDIER'S FRIEND." The anonymous author has indeed deſcribed ſome of the hardſhips of the ſoldier with truth enough, nor do I know that he has exceeded the truth therein, but in taxing the Officers *generally*, as the *gainers* by theſe practices he has certainly erred. It is not true that the Officers *generally* ſpeaking are *intereſted* in withholding any part of the ſoldier's pittance from him. I know indeed that the *Colonel* of each regiment does make a conſiderable *profit* out of the paltry eightpence a day which Government advances for each man: and though I do not pretend to call in queſtion the propriety of this practice, ſince *cuſtom* has eſtabliſhed it, yet that the whole body of Officers may not be jointly taxed with the ſuſpicion of peculation, I will relate to you the myſteries of cloathing a regiment, whence you may judge of the loſs ſuſtained by the men and the profit made by the Colonels, who always are the friends of Government.

You muſt know then, that out of the eight-pence which is voted by Parliament for the foot-ſoldier, two-pence of it

is never paid into the hands of the Regimental Paymaſter, but is kept back by the agent, who is appointed by the Colonel, and this two-pence *per diem* for each man, (amounting to three pounds ten-pence) is ſuppoſed to be for the purpoſe of furniſhing the man with regimental cloathing for the year. Now it happens that I have been privy to the cloathing of a company, and I am ſure the men I ſaw clothed got as much as any ſoldiers ever do get; and I am equally ſure that the clothier was paid as much for the articles, and that they were as good as any of the kind ever are; yet the cloathing of each man was charged at little more than thirty ſhillings: ſo that you may gueſs at the difference between 1l. 10s. *laid out*, and three pound ten-pence *received* for each ſoldier. And it will not be difficult to multiply this profit by the number of men in a regiment, whence you may judge what a Colonel gains. But be aſſured, no man has any, the ſmalleſt pretenſions to any of theſe profits, except the Colonel himſelf. Yet if I were to tell you how much cloathing the Colonel has the addreſs to procure for this ſmall ſum, you would be ſurprized: could you believe that the ſoldier receives from his Colonel annually a coat, a waiſtcoat and breeches, a hat, a ſhirt, pair of ſtockings and a ſort of cravat, and a pair of ſhoes? The coat, waiſtcoat, and breeches, the ſoldier really does wear, after he has himſelf paid for the alteration of them, and ſo he does the hat; but I muſt confeſs that the ſhirt, ſhoes, and ſtockings, in the Regiment in which I have ſerved have been ſo miſerably coarſe that the men have never been ſuffered to wear them. As to the Captain of a Regiment, I do not ſay tis *impoſſible* that he ſhould cheat a Soldier out of part of this remaining ſixpence a day; but I really think it very difficult, and I am ſure he would be deſigned and broken for ſo doing, if it were proved; that is, if he did it with a view of *pocketing* the money himſelf. For I acknowledge the Captains do make the men pay for various ornaments of Dreſs out of this ſixpence, but the Author of the above-mentioned pamphlet has inſinuated *much more*.—And as for the *Subalterns*, who are by far the moſt numerous body of officers, 'tis abſolutely impoſſible that *they* ſhould defraud the ſoldier of a halfpenny in their capacity of *ſubaltern* officers.—And thus I hope I have done away moſt of the wicked aſperſions caſt on the *whole body* of officers by the writer of the Soldier's Friend.

But

But alas! it is not ſufficient, that we acquit the Captain of peculation, if the poor ſoldier be wronged of his pay by any *other* means; ſince it is indifferent to him, how his pay be diſpoſed of, when it is not laid out for his own comfort and convenience.—And herein truth obliges me to confeſs, that I have ſeen hundreds of men obliged to ſubſiſt upon half or two thirds of their paltry ſubſiſtance, while the remainder was forcibly withheld to pay for the ridiculous ornaments with which ſoldiers are encumbered; ſuch as powder, frills to their ſhirts, ornaments to their hair, &c. &c. Nay, tho' they pay conſtantly to the Doctor ſo much a month out of their ſmall pittance, whether they be ſick or well, yet in addition to this they are obliged to pay five or ten ſhillings, as often as they are infected with a certain diſeaſe; which as ill-luck will have it, is the diſorder to which Gentlemen of the ſword are moſt liable of all others. But as this penalty may be ſuppoſed to be levied for the better preſervation of chaſtity and morality, I know not whether they ought to grumble at it.—

There is another Tax, however, to which they are ſubject [in Jamaica at leaſt] which has made me ſhudder, and by which I think neither Morality nor Religion can be ſaid to be at all promoted.—You are doubtleſs acquainted with the great mortality among the Troops in the Weſt-Indies, which for various reaſons perhaps cannot altogether be prevented; you may gueſs too, how greatly the expence of buying neceſſaries muſt be increaſed to the poor ſoldier in a country of that ſort; ſo great it is, that notwithſtanding ſome additional allowance is made to them by the Iſland, tis with difficulty they can make it out. But the circumſtance I allude to, is the enormous price of *Coffins*.—I think I ſee you laughing;—but I think you'll be ſerious when your firſt fit is over; and when I tell you ſeriouſly that the mortality of the men was ſo great when I was in Jamaica, that is, death did ſo conſtantly and ſo cloſely ſtare the men in the face, and their dread of being thrown into the grave, like dogs without a covering, was ſo great, that it was a very common thing for theſe poor wretches to pinch their bellies, ſo far as to ſcrape together a few *pounds* and leave it in the hands of their officer to procure a Coffin at their death.—For as ſoon as breath has quitted the body of a ſoldier, his Majeſty has no further occaſion for him; nor will the Government incur any further expence on his account.

I mention theſe circumſtances only that you may ſee how hard is the lot of a Soldier; even when treated according to the *avowed* tenor of the *law*, and in conformity to that bleſſed Conſtitution, which we Engliſhmen are taught to have always in our mouths, without ever attempting to underſtand or explain it? Yet the hardeſt of all circumſtances, in my opinion, is yet unnoticed.—A Soldier in England, (and I believe in England only) is a Soldier for life! for ever!—When he has once received that fatal lure, that deadly poiſon, his Majeſty's pay, as it is called, there is an end of his freedom. 'Tis in vain he gains the battle! A ſecond, a third, a fourth, nay a ſeventh, a tenth campaign makes no alteration in the term of his ſervitude.—No; though the enemies of his country ſhould be completely ſubdued, and though the miniſter ſhould be forced into the bleſſings of peace, for want of enemies to ſtand againſt him, or money to carry on the war; yet ſtill the Britiſh Soldier is *not entitled* to claim his diſcharge; to return to his loom, his plough-ſhare, his aged parents, or his beloved children! Such of the army indeed as are either ſickly or infirm from age, from fatigue, or wounds, ſuch men I ſay will generally be ſure of their diſcharge; becauſe when peace is concluded, the eſtabliſhment is always conſiderably leſſened, and the worſt men will of courſe be parted with firſt; yet even theſe wretches cannot *claim* their diſmiſſion, and 'tis only given them becauſe his Majeſty has no further ſervice for them;—and ſuch men as are ſtill able bodied, ſuch as are young, or ſuch as could ſtill be of ſervice to their aged fathers, and their tender children, ſuch men will in vain ſue for their diſcharge. No, they muſt be retained to watch the Blacks in the iſlands, to play Soldiers at Gibraltar; and to keep in awe their countrymen at home!

Now this, I confeſs, to me appears to be the conſummation of human miſery. For ever—to be a Soldier! or in plainer terms, to be a *ſlave* for ever!—And this too in a Country celebrated for FREEDOM!—My God, is it poſſible, in ENGLAND, famed for its mild and equitable laws, that a wretch ſhould in one unguarded moment be permitted, nay ſeduced by law, to part with his liberty, for ever? to ſell himſelf from his wife and ſtarving family, without redemption?—And ſhall not ſeven, ſhall not fourteen years long and faithful ſervice, nor twenty battles won,

nor

nor the tears of a ſtarving family, nor any thing be able to command his releaſe, but a ſum of money! which money alas! he can no more procure out of ſix-pence a day, than truth and honeſty can be procured at the Court of Pluto.

Such indeed is the practice of the Army! of the Britiſh Army! and ſuch do the Judges of the Crown ſay is the *law* of the land! but for myſelf, I am bold to ſay, I *think* it is *not* law;—perhaps indeed, my indignation at the ſufferings of my fellow creatures, has raiſed my boldneſs beyond the province of my underſtanding, for I pretend not to be a lawyer, but I really believe, that whereas a ſtanding army in this kingdom is only legal from March to March, as voted by the mutiny bill; I believe, I ſay, that no engagement on the part of a ſoldier, *can* be binding beyond the next March following. For how can a man legally engage to do that, which is unlawful? Yet how poor a chance would a ſoldier ſtand, who ſhould dare to make an objection of this ſort? he would be inſtantly charged with mutiny, he would be called to a court martial and puniſhed without delay.

Theſe are bitter reflections, my friend, to a man who has ſpent the prime of his life in the army, who once piqued himſelf on his profeſſion; and I muſt confeſs, who has been active in putting in force ſome of theſe hard and cruel practices! But we are told, they are according to the Laws of the Land; and that whoever dares call in queſtion the excellence of our Government, is a Traitor, an Atheiſt, a Foe to God and Man, and deſerves to be baniſhed from Society! Therefore I ſhall vent my execrations on *that part of Soldiery only*, which is not yet *openly acknowledged* by the Government; I mean the method of recruiting by *crimps*; which is ſo largely carried on, and which has irreſiſtably given riſe to theſe ſympathetic reflections!

So horrible is the practice of kidnapping and ſo repugnant to the feelings of civiliz'd men, that notwithſtanding the late riots in London, I find the generality of people are inclin'd to look upon it as a bugbear; and few with whom I have talked on the ſubject, can be brought to ſuppoſe that in the midſt of London, it can be poſſible to carry on ſo vile a trade to any great extent. In anſwer to this, I can only ſay, that I know the truth of the exiſtence of Crimps

by experience, that I can point out the houſes and the names of perſons by whom men have been bought and ſold; where you might have gone and choſen men as you would hogs or horſes, according to their ſize, their make, their ages, and their appearing; ſome, for eight, ten, twelve, Guineas; and now I am told, that the price is rais'd to more than Twenty Guineas for fine young men.—I could mention thoſe who would have contracted for any number of men to be deliver'd at any time and any place for ſo much a head; nor is it any uncommon thing for Gentlemen, who have bargain'd with Government to raiſe a certain number of Recruits, to procure them in this manner.—I believe indeed, that where *one* man is rais'd in the regular method, by Recruiting, that *five* are procur'd by Crimps, in London and great towns. And I never heard that Government had made any *objections* to men rais'd in this manner; on the contrary I imagin'd Miniſters were perfectly convinc'd that it was no longer poſſible to procure a ſufficient number of Recruits in war time by the uſual method of the beat of Drum; and I have frequently heard it aſſerted by the warmeſt advocates of Government [who have been acquainted with theſe practices,] that they anſwered two good purpoſes; the one of raiſing ſoldiers, and the other in clearing the Metropolis of a ſet of villains.—As to the firſt aſſertion, I do really believe, that without this practice of Crimping, it would be impoſſible to raiſe men faſt enough for the war. But as for the ſecond, I know from experience that they are not *always* the raſcally part of the community, who are decoy'd and taken in by theſe blood-hounds; on the contrary I have ſeen the unhappy of all ſorts fall victims to the horrible trade of kidnapping; and I have been witneſs to ſcenes of this kind, which would have put the queſtion beyond a doubt.—In ſhort, though I have been in the Weſt-Indies and have ſeen a cargo of Negroes brought in from Guinea, I declare I do not think the ſight more ſhocking, than to behold a lot of young Engliſhmen delivered by a Crimp, to the officer or regiment who receives them; ſome drunk, ſome ſpiritleſs and heart-broken; ſome ſwearing and damming that they *will not* be ſoldiers, for they have never *engaged* to be ſuch. And tho' I have known ſeveral perſiſt in this aſſertion, yet I never knew but one who procured his releaſe by it; and he was a fellow who had been an Attorney. One

circumſtance

circumſtance indeed tends *ultimately* to leſſen the number of victims to this odious trade; which is, that many of the perſons ſo procured do actually make a trade of it, and are in league with the Crimps to run away from the ſervice and inliſt themſelves over and over again for different corps; and ſome of theſe are even ſo expert and methodical that they will not deſert, till they have been *inſpected* by the General Officer or Inſpector General appointed to review them; whereby the Officer, who is ſuppoſed to have enliſted them, *enſures* his object, and gains the Rank promiſed to him by Government; for it is not unuſual for Officers to agree with a Crimp for a number of men, not paying the whole price of them, till the ſaid men ſhall have been ſeen and inſpected by the proper perſons nominated by Government.

Now, excluſive of the inhumanity of this practice, I beg you to attend to its pernicious conſequence in point of *expence to the nation*.—Government, unable to get men in the regular way, ſay they are obliged to offer an advanced rank and pay to young Officers, who can procure them in any manner; and the Miniſter has the aſſurance to boaſt this is not only a good, but a *cheap* method; for, ſays he, the men coſt the public nothing; being rais'd at the expence of the Officer promoted. But you muſt obſerve—that for an hundred men ſo raiſed there muſt be appointed [beſides field-officers, when they come to be Regimented] at leaſt one Captain, two Lieutenants, and one Enſign; which four Officers are entitled to half-pay after the War.—Now the half-pay of theſe four will be 203l. 10s. per annum for their lives, which cannot be eſtimated at leſs than ten years purchaſe, making a ſum of 2030l. for one hundred men; that is more than twenty pounds a man; and if a great part of theſe fellows, as ſoon as they have been inſpected, deſert and inliſt again with other perſons, you ſee a good-for-nothing rogue may coſt the nation twenty pounds, two, three or four times over, and never ſerve after all—for if a man has once paſſed muſter, the loſs of him, by deſertion, is at the expence of Government.

Another great loſs to the nation upon theſe men is, that they are, generally ſpeaking, debauch'd and unhealthy in the higheſt degree; [For it is commonly from the brothels and pot-houſes, from Taverns and the other haunts of deſ-

perate and unhappy men that these wretched victims are procured, so that they are the least fit for the fatigues of a campaign that can possibly be imagined ;] and I suspect this must be one main reason, why we observe the mortality so much greater in new-raised corps than in old ones, as soon as ever they come upon service.—I really forget how many of these new-raised Regiments last war dwindled away to mere nothing in the course of *two* years by death, sickness, and desertion; tho' they actually never saw an enemy, nor ever heard a shot fired.—But the facts were notorious to all who had opportunities of seeing and judging.

It has lately, my friend, been very much the fashion to declaim against the miseries and inhumanity of the *slave*-trade, and I have joined frequently in the deepest lamentations on that wretched subject; but alas! our ignorant countrymen, and their fair tender-hearted wives and daughters, little imagine that the tears they shed in such abundance for the distant African, are doubly due to our own unhappy fellow subjects, in the lock-up houses of *Crimps*, [in the king's barracks, as they are called ;] in the West-Indies, where they often suffer as much as the Negroes themselves; and even in the bloody plains of Flanders, whither they have been dragged by cruel force to the deliberate destruction of men, against whom they have never conceived the least emotion of resentment, and whom they are doomed to hew in pieces, or be killed themselves—without one impulse of private animosity; merely at the *instigation* of their superiors!!!

Imagine what a situation this must be to a man tolerably well educated, who perhaps has even a strong sense of Religion, which, [however it may have been stifled in the hours of rest and debauchery, which brought him into the power of the crimp] has at length returned upon him with redoubled force!—Imagine, I say, the condition and the feelings of such a man, in such a case; for I have known several such.—Nay more, you may well suppose a wretch of this sort to be your own relation, or your former friend; for I declare that I have seen frequently among these victims, many who had been bred in opulence and educated liberally; but who from their own infatuation and the villainy of the times had fallen into this abominable snare.—Oh! think on this, I say, and judge of the government,

the

the *morality* and the *religion* of a country, which not only tolerates, but which, they ſay, abſolutely requires a conduct of this ſort to ſupport its ſyſtem!—Is this the boaſted *freedom* of ENGLISHMEN? Is this the *practice* of CHRISTIANS?

But you will aſk, perhaps, how are men to be obtained for the Defence of the Country, ſince 'tis acknowledged that by the regular *fair* and *ſpotleſs* manner of recruiting and beating up for *Volunteers*, as they are called, we cannot half ſupply the armies?

My anſwer is, that if wicked wars were not ſo often wickedly undertaken for the ſelfiſh purpoſes of wicked Governors, that we ſhould not then have occaſion for ſo many man-killers under the deluſive name of Soldiers. But Governments, like individuals, muſt ſuit their means to their ends.—The very word *Soldier*, if it was fairly explained and underſtood, would excite horror in the minds of many who now pronounce it with eſteem and reſpect. I ſay the word *ſoldier* is ſo diabolical in its modern ſenſe, that is, in the uſe in which it is now actually *employed*, [tho' not as our honeſt countrymen *underſtand* it] that it had no equivalent, it *could* have no equivalent in the *free* ſtates of the antient world; much leſs ought it to have been admitted into a country profeſſing Chriſtianity;—for a *Soldier* ſeems now to mean neither more nor leſs than a man, who for *pay* will fight and *kill* any body whom he is ſet upon by his ſuperior Officer.

In a free country, if unhappily war ſhould become *neceſſary*, every man, who is able from his age and health, ought to bear his *ſhare* of the fatigue and danger, ſuch was the caſe in the pureſt times of the Republic at Rome; ſhocking as many of our gothic inſtitutions are, I ſuſpect that a man ſkilled in the antient practices and law of England could ſhew, that the mode of defending this country has been conſiderably chang'd of late years, and that the burden has been thrown where it had leaſt right to be put, either in reſpect of Law, Equity, or Policy.

In Equity, every protected member of the community and eſpecially every *favoured* or *privileged* member is bound to contribute to the public good in labor, in wiſdom, or in arms; as he is beſt able.—In the arrangements of the feudal ſyſtem of England, as infamous it as was in many particulars, the proprietors

prietors of land formed the army for the ſupport of the Kingdom; But now the landed intereſt and the Ariſtocracy in general have ſo contrived it by their excellent conſtitution, that every man, the meaneſt and pooreſt even bears his ſhare of the military *expence*, at the ſame time that the *whole* of the *actual danger* and *fatigue* is caſt upon them. A nobleman, or man of large property now conſiders himſelf as free from obligation to turn out and defend his property, as if that property did not belong to him, or as if it did not procure him any advantages ſuperior to the bulk of the people.

I have ventured to explain to you that the word *Soldier* means a man fighting for *hire only*, being derived from the Italian *Soldo* a piece of money. Let us ſee what Blackſtone ſays of the *titles* and *ſuppoſed offices* of *Dukes*, *Marquiſſes*, &c. &c.—Hence we may judge what the nation have a right to expect from men honoured with thoſe names and privileges.

" Among the Saxons the latin name of *Dukes*, DUCES, " is very frequent, and ſignified as among the Romans, the " commanders or leaders of their armies, &c.

" A *Marqueſs*, MARCHIO, is the next degree of nobility, " this office formerly was [for dignity and duty were ne- " ver ſeparated by our anceſtors] to guard the frontiers " and limits of the kingdom, which were called the mar- " ches from the Tutonic word *Marche* a limit: as in par- " ticular, were the Marches of Wales and Scotland, " while they continued to be enemies countries, &c.

" It is obſervable that almoſt all nations call their " *Knights* by ſome appellation derived from a horſe; they " are alſo called in our law *milites*, becauſe they formed a " part or indeed the *whole* of the royal army, in virtue of " their feudal tenures; one condition of which was, " that every one who held a Knight's fee [which in Hen- " ry the IId's. time amounted to 20l. per. annum] was o- " bliged to be knighted, and attend the King in his Wars, " or fine for his non-compliance, &c.

" *Eſquires* and *Gentlemen* are confounded together by Sir " Edward Coke, who obſerves that every Eſquire is a " Gentleman, and a Gentleman is defined to be one, *qui* " *arma gerit*, &c. [Blackſtone's Commentaries, Book 1ſt

" chap.

" chap. 12] This, my friend, it ſeems was the antient me-
" thod of raiſing defenders for the Kingdom of England :"
nor do we find that the lower orders of People were even *aſked* nor *expected* to ſtand forth in defence of property, which belonged only to the rich ;—how many of our *preſent Dukes*, *Marquiſes*, *Knights*, and *Gentlemen* do now actually and really undergo the dangers and bloodſhed of war, it is ridiculous to inſiſt upon.—Let them think on theſe and let them bluſh [if they are not paſt it] for the death and hardſhips impoſed on the neareſt of their countrymen, on the pooreſt and moſt helpleſs of *women* and *children* of England, who are frequently obliged to attend their wretched huſbands and fathers in thoſe bloody wars; which are excited often times for the emolument of rich and titled Miniſters and in the beſt of times for the defence of the wealth and property of the richeſt members of the community.

Nay, ſo ſenſible have men been of the Equity of this mode of reaſoning, that even in the early age of the Roman Monarchy, the people were divided by Tullius their king, into ſix claſſes, when each of the *five firſt* claſſes furniſhed its quota of men in arms, at their own expence, and according to their *property* ; whereas the *ſixth* claſs, being ſuppoſed to have *no* property, neither paid any taxes nor was called upon to ſerve in the army.

Thus much for the Law and Equity of the caſe : Let us now endeavour to conſider the *policy* of making wars, and carrying them on by Levies of this ſort—I mean by men of the loweſt condition and the pooreſt intellect, or the moſt corrupted habit of minds, who having either been inveigled by the lawful mode of recruiting, or kindnapped by the avowed connivance of thoſe in power, are equally incapable of judging and feeling as men ought to do; who are entruſted with the defence of the Country and the lives and property of Engliſhmen.

Of all the ſtates of antiquity, Carthage ſeems to have reſembled our's more than any other ; ſhe was wealthy and commercial ; ſhe was ſovereign of the ſeas ; and, like us, ſhe carried on her land wars by mercenary troops.—For you muſt obſerve, if an army be merely retained by the principle of *pay*, and if thoſe who compoſe it, are not united in all the *ſame* intereſts with the people who pay them,

and

and whom they are expected to defend; I apprehend that in cases of *extreme* danger and nice critical conjunctures, it makes little difference to the unhappy country so protected, whether her soldiers be the refuse of her own jails; the dupes of her own recruiting sergeants; the wretched produce of her own crimps, or whether they be what are commonly called *foreign mercenaries.*

Now if we consider, that when Carthage was at her height of glory, she was attacked by a neighbouring nation, the most formidable and rapacious at that time in Europe; by a nation whose military modes of establishments were directly opposite to her own, inasmuch as every Roman Citizen was a *fighting* man; trained and ready to die for the defence of his country; then, I say, not only Britain in her present circumstances may be likened to Carthage; but with respect to us, modern France may likewise be compared to ancient Rome; consequently the dreadful state of that Republic, once the most flourishing in the universe, and the most formidable rival of Rome, must merit our highest attention at this juncture; both as the greatness of her power arose from and was supported by her wealth and commerce, and as she owed her ruin to her own internal mismanagement.

The Genius of the Carthaginians was undoubtedly warlike as well as commercial, and affords undeniable proof that those qualities are by no means incompatible to the same people. And who has ever ventured to doubt or depreciate the *natural courage* of Britons? But Polybius in speaking of the Carthaginians, says, nothing was infamous among them, that was attended with gain; and as proof, he adds, that many of the dignities and most honourable employments in the state were openly sold!——Whether the sale of Commissions in *our army*, whether the mode of procuring certain places, and of making such fortunes under Government as many are daily doing, and whether certain other practices can come under any unjust imputation of this sort, I am not authorised to determine; but sure I am, that the present situation of the Country requires the most serious attention; and I shall go one step further with the history of Carthage.—Yet let us hope, yet let us pray fervently, that the likeness betwixt the two states may cease here.

The

The Carthaginians were ſo wealthy, that whatever troops they wanted [beyond the few of their own that they choſe to employ] they could buy from their neighbouring ſtates in Greece and Africa; who traded in blood and war as much as the German Princes now do; and were equally ready to ſell the lives of their ſubjects to the beſt bidder.—This kind of Policy which prevails ſo generally in all mercantile ſtates, does certainly at firſt ſight appear very plauſible; and men in affluence are apt to bleſs themſelves; that nothing can diſturb *their eaſe*, that *they* are free from the toils and dangers of war, and that by the application of a *ſmall part* of their wealth, they ſhall at all times ſecure the remainder of their own lives. But a ſlight view of the calamities which befell the Carthaginians from this miſtaken notion, will ſhew the dangers which attend a country, whoſe people are not *generally* accuſtomed to the manly office of defending themſelves. For Carthage, while ſhe was ſpreading terror and giving laws to the moſt diſtant nations by her powerful fleets and mercenary armies, did actually tremble herſelf upon the firſt invaſion of her own territories, and ſoon alas! ſhe fell a memorable victim to her own ill-judged policy; for the total diſuſe of arms among the *bulk* of her own people, had laid that opulent country open, and made her a tempting and an eaſy prey to the Roman invaders.

May the inordinate *luxury*—the ſordid *avarice*!—and unmanly inactivity of the Nobles, and other opulent Inhabitants of Britain never be attended with the ſame fatal conſequences!—May every Briton henceforth have the wit to *ſee* his intereſts, and the courage to *ſupport* them, not placing his truſt in venal miniſters, or his ſtrength in the poor unhappy deluded part of the community! but above all, let us not truſt [as has been recently apprehended] to the introduction of real *foreign* mercenaries. Let us look with a conſtant and jealous eye on French loyaliſts, on German auxiliaries and on all mercenary troops employed by mercenary miniſters.

And now, my friend, in order to add ſome weight to my own thoughts on the ſubject of military matters, I ſhal cloſe this letter with a few more extracts fromthe orthodox Judge Blackſtone.—He obſerves, [Book 1ſt. chap. 13th.]

" In a land of liberty it is extremely dangerous to make " a diſtinct order of the profeſſion of arms. In abſolute

" monarchi

" monarchies this is neceſſary for the ſafety of the Prince,
" and ariſes from the main principle of their conſtitution
" which is that of governing by fear: but in free ſtates the
" profeſſion of *ſoldier* is juſtly an object of jealouſy. In
" theſe no man ſhould take up arms but with a view to
" defend his country and its laws: he puts not off the ci-
" tizen, when he enters the camp; but it is becauſe he is
" a citizen, and would wiſh to continue ſo, that makes
" him for a while a ſoldier. The laws therefore and con-
" ſtitution of theſe Kingdoms know no ſuch ſtate as that
" of a perpetual ſtanding ſoldier, bred up to no other pro-
" feſſion than that of war: and it was not till the reign of
" Henry VII. that the Kings of England had ſo much as
" a guard about their perſons."

" In the time of our Saxon anceſtors, as appears from
" Edward the confeſſor's laws, the military force of this
" kingdom was in the hands of the Dukes or Heretocks,
" who were conſtituted through every province and coun-
" ty in the kingdom; being taken out of the principal No-
" bility and ſuch as were moſt remarkable for being " ſa-
" pientes, fideles et animoſi." Their duty was to lead
" and regulate the Engliſh armies with a very unlimited
" power " prout eis viſum fuerit, ad honorem coronæ et
" utilitatem regni." And becauſe of this great power they
" were elected by the people in their full aſſembly, or folk-
" mote, in the ſame manner as ſheriffs were elected: follow-
" ing ſtill that old fundamental maxim of the Saxon con-
" ſtitution, that where any officer was entruſted with ſuch
" power, as if abuſed might tend to the oppreſſion of the
" people, that power was delegated to him by the vote of
" the people themſelves: &c. &c.

" Upon the Norman conqueſt the feudal law was intro-
" duced here in all its rigour, the whole of which is built
" on a military plan. I ſhall not here enter into the par-
" ticulars of that conſtitution, but ſhall only obſerve that
" in conſequence thereof, all the lands in the kingdom were
" divided into what were called Knights Fees, in number
" above ſixty thouſand, and for every Knight's Fee, a
" Knight or Soldier, *miles*, was bound to attend the King
" in his wars, for forty days in a year; in which ſpace of
" time, before war was reduc'd to a ſcience, the campaign
" was generally finiſhed, and a kingdom either conquered
" or victorious: &c. &c.

" In

" In the mean time we are not to imagine that the king-
" dom was left wholly without defence in caſe of domeſtic
" inſurrection or the proſpect of foreign Invaſions. Beſides
" thoſe, who by their military tenures were bound to per-
" form forty days ſervice in the field, firſt the aſſize of
" arms, enacted the 27th. Henry II. and afterwards the
" ſtatute of Wincheſter under Edward the I. obliged every
" man according to his *eſtate* and *degree*, to provide a deter-
" minate quantity of ſuch arms as were then in uſe in or-
" der to keep the peace, and conſtables were appointed in
" all hundreds by the latter ſtatute, to ſee that ſuch arms
" were provided. Theſe weapons were changed by the
" ſtatute 4 and 5 Ph. and M. c. 2. into others of more mo-
" dern ſervice, but both this and the former proviſions
" were repeated in the reign of James I. While theſe con-
" tinued in force, it was uſual from time to time for our
" Princes, to iſſue commiſſions of array, and ſend into eve-
" ry country officers in whom they could confide to muſter
" and array [or ſet in military order] the inhabitants of
" every Diſtrict, and the form of the commiſſion of array
" was ſettled in parliament in the 5th year of Henry IV.
" But at the ſame time it was provided that no man ſhould
" be compelled to go out of the Kingdom at any rate, nor
" out of his ſhire but in caſes of urgent neceſſity : &c. &c.

" When the nation was engaged in War, more veteran
" troops and more regular diſcipline were eſteemed to be
" neceſſary, than could be expected from a mere Militia.
" And therefore at ſuch times more rigorous methods were
" put in uſe for the raiſing of armies and the due regulation
" and diſcipline of the ſoldiery : which are to be looked
" upon only as temporary excreſcences bred out of the diſ-
" temper of the ſtate, and not as any part of the perma-
" nent and perpetual laws of the kingdom. For martial
" law, which is built upon no ſettled principles, but is
" entirely arbitrary in its deciſions, is, as Sir Matthew
" Hale obſerves, in truth and reality, no law, but ſome-
" thing *indulged* rather than allowed as a law; &c. &c.

" To prevent the executive power from being able to
" oppreſs, ſays Baron Monteſquieu, it is requiſite that the
" armies with which it is entruſted ſhould conſiſt of the
" people, and have the *ſame Spirit* with the people, as was
" the caſe at Rome, 'till Marius new modelled the le-
" gions by enliſting the Rabble of Italy, and laid the

" foundation

" foundation of all the military tyranny that enſued. No-
" thing then, according to theſe principles, ought to be
" more guarded againſt, in a free ſtate, than making the
" military power, when ſuch a one is neceſſary to be kept on
" foot, a body too diſtinct from the people. Like ours
" therefore it ſhould wholly be compoſed of natural ſub-
" jects: it ſhould *only be enliſted for a ſhort and limited time:*
" the ſoldiers alſo ſhould live intermixed with the people,
" no ſeparate camp, no *Barracks*, no inland fortreſſes
" ſhould be allowed. And perhaps it might ſtill be better,
" if, by diſmiſſing a ſtated number and enliſting others at
" every renewal of their term, a circulation could be kept
" up between the army and the people, and the citizen and
" the ſoldier be more intimately connected together: &c.
" &c.

" One of the greateſt advantages of our Engliſh law, is,
" that not only the crimes themſelves which it puniſhes,
" but alſo the penalties which it inflicts are aſcertained and
" notorious: nothing is left to arbitrary diſcretion: The
" King by his Judges diſpenſes what the law has previouſ-
" ly ordained; but is not himſelf the legiſlator. How
" much therefore is it to be regretted, that a ſet of men,
" whoſe bravery has ſo often preſerved the liberties of their
" country, ſhould be reduced to a ſtate of ſervitude in the
" midſt of a nation of free men! For Sir Edward Coke
" will inform us, that it is one of the genuine marks of
" ſervitude, to have the law, which is our rule of action,
" either concealed or precarious, " miſera eſt ſervitus, ubi
" jus eſt vagum et incognitum." Nor is this ſtate of ſer-
" vitude quite conſiſtent, with the maxims of ſound policy
" obſerved by other free nations. For the greater the ge-
" neral liberty is which any ſtate enjoys, the more cautious
" has it uſually been in introducing ſlavery in any particu-
" lar order or profeſſion. Theſe men, as Baron Monteſ-
" quieu obſerves, ſeeing the liberty which others poſſeſs, and
" which they themſelves are excluded from, are apt [like
" eunuchs in the Eaſtern ſeraglios] to live in a perpetual
" ſtate of envy and hatred towards the reſt of the commu-
" nity; and indulge a malignant pleaſure in contributing
" to deſtroy thoſe privileges, to which they can never be
" admitted.

" Hence have many free ſtates, by departing from this
" rule, been endangered by the revolt of their ſlaves:

" while

" while in abſolute and deſpotic governments, where no
" real liberty exiſts, and conſequently no invidious com-
" pariſons can be formed, ſuch incidents are extremely
" rare. Two precautions are therefore adviſed to be ob-
" ſerved in all prudent and free governments. 1ſt. To
" prevent the introduction of ſlavery at all. Or 2d. If it
" be really introduced, not to truſt thoſe ſlaves with arms,
" who will then find themſelves an overmatch for the free
" man. Much leſs ought the ſoldiery to be an exception to
" the people in general, and the only ſtate of ſervitude in
" the nation. &c. &c.

FINIS.

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